

Synapse



Visual Society



Acknowledgements: Synapse 2002

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Advisor: In Guru Bickham's absence, we have acquired another Buddha in his place: Dr. Tom Young

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Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson~

Synapse

Fall 2001- Spring 2002

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Letter from the Editor:

After four years of attending this university, I have finally figured it out. Strange how it takes that long to really know what you want to do with your life. For some, these answers may take their whole life. There is a strange pattern that you follow through four years of college education. Screwing up your grades and getting drunk may contain the first and quite possibly the second year, but then you try to get yourself together but are too lazy to do as well as you could the third year. In the fourth year, you finally figure it all out in time for graduation. What is this supposed to mean? Well, Synapse, a philosophy orientated journal has taken 26 years to come full swing, and produce a true avenue for students with opinions, thoughts, and ideals to expound on.

In this issue we have photography, poetry, short essay, book and movie reviews (which are from our weekly philosophical movie/ wine nights). I have titled Synapse "Visual Society" from the suggestion and idea of the Assistant Editor, Chris Kubrick. Over the years television and magazines have their taste in music videos, commercials, sitcoms, kids shows, travel, and news broadcasts to keep us informed of the world from our someone else's perspective. This issue is to show those who try to control our thoughts through PC television shows and trendy magazines that our society may be more visual because of them, however it is time for them to see our side of the story.

Synapse is a philosophical journal put out by the Philosophy Club every semester and accepts any types of work from any major to make the journal its very best. I hope that throughout your readings and viewing in this journal, you find something that inspires you, insights discussion or brings about a new thought/perspective.

Sincerely,
Erin L. Delaney

Officers



Erin L. Delaney is.



James Lawrence Fromm is a BSE major with a concentration in hiking, kayaking, and primitive skills. Jimmy takes the hides from cute funny creatures, tans them, and then wears them. His favorite philosophers include: Jim, Jack, David, and Edward. Contributions to the philosophy club include→ "where's the pizza?"



Minelle is a Junior Math Ed. Major from Coudersport, PA. She has been in Philosophy Club for two years, and always enjoys a good logical argument.

Officers continued:



As president, Keith Fisher is theoretically the ringleader of this circus of an organization. Although, in practice, we are all followers. He's a senior philosophy major. As a transfer student, Keith's stay in Mansfield has been short and sweet (3 semesters to be exact). There is a high probability that Keith's years immediately following his Mansfield experience are being spent studying Ethics at a graduate level, snowboarding, backpacking, and mountain hiking.



Chris Kubrick is a senior English major with a minor in music. He has been an active member in the Philosophy Club for four years, and three as the club Vice-Pres. Other interests include writing/composition and guitar. After graduating from MU next year his intentions are to pursue a music career. Other than that writing and literary endeavors will surely inhibit his ability to actually find or hold a steady job.



Movie Review by Keith Fisher

The year that *SLC Punk* was showed at the Sundance Film Festival, I happened to be residing in Park City, UT. Without much interest in independent films at the time, not many of the films showing attracted my attention. Of the many movies showing throughout the week, some friends and I agreed to watch one. I imagined this movie to be a "slice of life" sort of film, without much of a storyline. However, the 1980's punk rock lifestyle depictions seemed appealing.

The movie met some of my expectations, while exceeding others. It was, in fact, what I considered to be a "slice of life" type of film. It also illustrated some interesting elements of the 1980's punk rock lifestyle. Ironically, the setting is in Salt Lake City, Utah; the most religiously influenced city in America. This fact resulted in humorous contributions to the movie. Another positive contribution to the movie is its soundtrack, which I consider one of the best soundtracks ever. The well-rounded compilation of energetic punk rock includes bands such as Dead Kennedys, Minor Threat, and The Ramones.

The punk rock overtones are woven throughout Stevo and Bob's experiences. The recent graduates of University of Utah are faced with the problems of growing up and accepting change. Self-considered nonconformists have numerous run-ins with members of other various subcultures, particularly mods and rednecks.

As the characters develop, their ideals are challenged. Stevo, in particular, faces some serious pressures. His father consistently nags him to attend Harvard Law School, his close

friend Mike has decided to move away to pursue a career in botany, Bob is consumed in a relationship with his newfound girlfriend, and the people that Stevo thought shared his anarchist ideals are conforming to traditional expectations of what twenty-somethings should be doing. Stevo begins to wonder whether his friends are posers with no sense of conviction, or if his punk ideals are, in fact, nothing more than some adolescent phase.

The conflict that was introduced as Stevo and Bob against the world evolves into Stevo against himself. As Stevo's surroundings change, confusion grows. The theme of the film becomes a question of ideals. Stevo begins to wonder, as many young people often do, if our convictions are nothing more than empty causes. Is there any intrinsic value in going against the grain, whether for a greater good, or for the sake of rebellion in and of itself? At what cost should we stand behind our beliefs, and when (if ever) is one justified in "selling out"?

While external pressures pull Stevo in every direction, his tenacity to old ideals resists change. A life-altering tragedy forces him to prioritize. After a series of events that send Stevo on an emotional roller coaster ride, he finally chooses the path that he will follow. His decision, however, does not completely solve the problem of ideals. Contrarily, it leaves the viewer asking more questions.

Movie Review of *Billy Jack* by James Fromm

Billy Jack: "You know what I am going to do... Just for the hell of it?"

Posner: "Tell me."

Billy Jack: "I am going to take this right foot and wop you on this side of your face (Pointing to the left side of Posner's face)... and you want to know something... there's not a damn thing you're gonna be able to do about it."

Smiling sarcastically inches from Billy Jack's face, "Really." "Really," says Billy Jack as he takes his right foot and brings it up and smacks Posner on the left side of his face, knocking him down to the ground.

It was my favorite scene to one of my favorite movies, *Billy Jack*, and I was showing it to my philosophy club on movie night. The pressure was on because everyone else had come up with some good movies that we watched, so I didn't want to be the one with the first lame-ass movie. No one in the group had heard of the movie before, probably because it was made in 1969, before these cats were even born. I wasn't sure if they would like the movie or not; it is from the sixties, it moves slowly, but it has a lot of story to it. The story line for its time was out there, going against traditional American values, values of white America that is, but for Native Americans it stuck to a tradition that is centuries old. Live with the earth and all that inhabit it in peace. I was really happy when everyone there that night really liked the movie. Part of the reason they liked the movie was the nostalgia, but the other is the theme is as true today as it was then.

Billy Jack is a half-breed ex-green beret back from Vietnam. He tries to live in seclusion on an Arizona reservation, but is drawn to a school for troubled youths that sits on the reservation, and he is drawn to a pacifist woman who runs the school, named Jean. Billy finds himself

protector of the reservation (people shooting the horses on the reservation for dog food companies) and the school. Tempers rise as the townspeople don't like a bunch of hippies coming into their town. Trouble starts and Billy is there to protect the students. Billy (played by the director Tom Laughlin) shows off his karate moves in a few scenes, like the one shown told above.

This movie was way ahead of its time. It dealt with controversial issues that no one wanted to talk about, like how Native Americans were treated then and are now. Did you know the Navaho and Hopi are being removed from their reservation that they have lived on for thousands of years; so mining companies can come in and destroy their sacred mountain? Why doesn't anyone talk about this? Good question. The answer is out there and within, are you ready to look?

**"Speak the truth, and all things alive or brute
are there do seem to stir and move to bear
you witness."**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Poetical Writings: A Gathering of Bards

#168 Emily Dickinson

Much Madness is divinest Sense—
To a discerning Eye—
 Much Sense—the starkest Madness
'Tis the Majority
 In this, as All, prevail—
Assent—and you are sane—
 Demur—you're straightway dangerous—
 And handled with a Chain—



By Erin Delaney

Non-conformity

Free thinking

You're free to think.
Open your mind
Close your mouth.
Close your mind.

Nice to meet you
I'm fine.
Let's talk about the weather.
Let's go through the usual motions—
I am a poor musician
And you?
I have to go
I don't have time for this—
I'm a non-conformist.

We want to be part of it.
I'm a non-conformist.

I am an individual.

I hang out with other individuals
Who conform with me.

We're non-conformists.

Variation on a Theme

By Minelle Sallade

I found myself while lost one day
Within a garden maze
The walls were high and somehow I
Had been there many days
The walls were made of rose
And I hardly felt the thorns
But one way or another
Each one took a different road
And I was just fine by myself
But I was still alone

Then one day I was wandering
And came around a bend
And standing there before me
Was a new and special friend
I didn't know just then the love
That was there behind his smile
But I asked my friend to walk with me
For just a little while

And so we walked and talked together
For many, many days
'Til finally we found ourselves
At the exit to the maze
And I looked into his shining eyes
And then we said, "I do...
'Cause there's no one that I rather
would be lost with than with you."

And I knew that we'd be happy For the rest of both our
days And hand in hand, we walked into
The very next big maze

WIND CHIMES

BY CHRIS KUBRICK

While the inevitable moon gathers for her feast, I slip
languidly through torn glass, and into cracked blue skies.
The image has been damaged,
Not me, but a crystallized perception
Pushed and crushed
The porch light is on and the brisk air of direly awaiting
October engulfs my only sense to speak.

The speakers of the ear, wait...
Spiraling through me,
Waiting in caves as large as statues,
The very sound that caressed my pain is asking for its return
The price of the momentary

The knock on the door,
Condescending nature is there.
I gather the strength to lock it,
But she still tries to open
I've torn the insides of this place
And I say to myself all that's left is nothing
She must leave now for her needs are none
Yet, the chimes of embarrassment sing the hollow song of
music, and the wind only embraces its sweet song,
Oh, please let it stop it's too painful anymore
The idea of life is no longer the fresh and revitalizing one
The automatic flush of the horror is gone for a new modern
age of innocence.
Yet, it is so very cold in here.
They say that only might is right, but that's tearing me up.
No!! I say to that eager snob
The word is out, another man hates his life and doesn't know
the difference from its end.

By Erin Delaney

Silence
Isolation
Peace
Freedom
Insecurity
Frustration
Emptiness
Apathy
Loneliness
Fear
Fear, fear
Alone
Truth
Dependence
Independence
Suffering
Compassion
Helplessness
Confusion
Bewilderment
Sadness
Avoidance
Solitude
Aspirations
Trivial??
Lonely
Hurt
Apathy
Silence



Through Sincerity & contradiction
You will know yourself... Truth conquers.

There it is
I've laid my soul on the line
There is my heart
On the written page

Bleeding before you

All of my troubles, joys, angers, and fears
For you to enjoy in this song.



TV's and Moving Cares ~Chris Kubrick

The cancer of cures
It's from deprivation of what I know I don't like
The wreath of flowers that decorates her car
In color-coded, red haze

No do not enter what I have built for mediocre
Its not four turning wheels but rather the sound of the moving cares
Leaving for what is thought of as progression
Only helping to have gone what you once loved

Shoot your own dog and bury what lies beneath it
The statue of the critic is peeping on your scene
The fast acting perpetrator will ask for your identity and you have nothing
to give
The price is your unborn ideas
To be cashed in for fake money and ground up invention
Only to be later thought of as high notoriety

Give up on the blabber of sacredness and live in the present, it's your only
talent
Might the beast of economies be your only sake for happiness? I have
moved on and won't let the unsaid stop my song

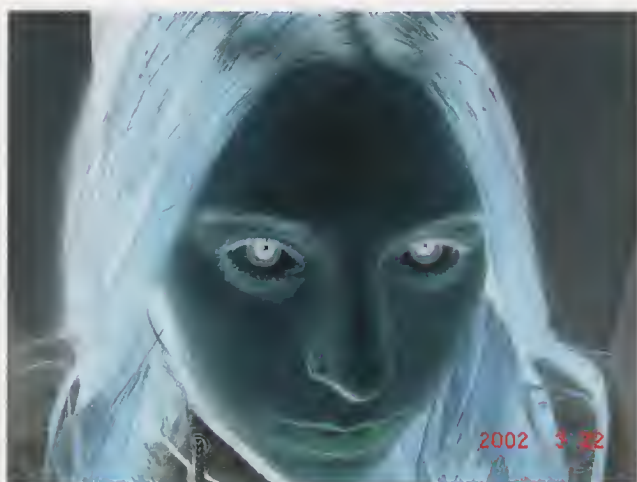
Yellow Tattoos by Chris Kubrick

**I've been proposed by casting gestures and fake romantics
To support tables of coffee for itchy sailors
Coming for the new tragedy
Drinking to your high altar
Wrathing in dried seas of imagination
Colored invention, momentarily distilled and branded in
yellow tattoo factories nestled by comfortable smokestacks
Taking prize in hollowed out maps and charred forests
before they tire of you
Vulnerable axioms raging louder than conviction
and snowing down onto bearded postcards
Wasting your thoughtful action on useless recognition**

**To you then I say I'll recycle my thoughts and burn them
into a scarred index of ignorant status
And relax in no longer paying for the pious reign of your
smoking hell.**

Chris Kubrick

Go Read A Book



Read Some Heinlein by Minelle Sallade

Robert A. Heinlein is, without a doubt, my favorite author. So I must admit that I am mildly biased in his favor. However that should not stop you from taking me seriously when I say this: Read some Heinlein. A brief biography can be found in the Encarta Encyclopedia (Yeah, this guy really was that good, even if you haven't heard of him) at <http://encarta.msn.com>. Oh, and by the way, if you're looking for a popular reference, his books The Puppet Masters and Starship Troopers were both made into movies.

Heinlein's books have had an impact because they explore aspects of our humanity that have never been probed in quite this fashion. At times, the future that Heinlein portrays may seem unrealistic, but his characters, at least, are quite believable. I'm going to recommend my two favorite Heinlein books here, but please, be assured, this brief review cannot, by its nature, explain the breadth and depth of his many works.

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress takes place in a future where the nations of Earth have created a colony on the moon, or more specifically, in the moon, since to live on the surface would be preposterous; you would be instantaneously sunburned in the day, and the heat required to keep you warm at night would be preposterously expensive. However, when these cities were built, scientists were not the ones to occupy this strange place. Instead, one idea solved three of Earth's major problems: famine, waste disposal, and overcrowding. The solution seemed quite simple: Send all of Earth's criminals to the moon. Send them compostable garbage, which can be used as fertilizers, and have them grow food as slave labor. Since there will be more food than "colonists," they can send the surplus back to Earth, and help aid in the struggle against world hunger. However, not all those who went

to the moon were men. As a result, children were born on the moon. These children stay with their parents, but by the time they have a choice of whether to live on Earth or not, a trip there would mean death by gravity. Thus, they, too, become slave labor for the planet Earth. Before too many people can complain about it, the nations of Earth begin issuing "paychecks" to these free-born citizens. They are, of course, getting the better end of the deal anyway, because it costs less to pay off all these people on the moon than it would to ship them back. But all of this is backstory.

The book opens with the character Mannie, a third-generation "loonie," discussing his friend Mike, which is quite possibly the universe's first *unintended* A.I. Mike, you see, is the computer in charge of the lunar cities' needs. He is the most powerful computer in the known world, and he is buried deep in Luna City (which, if you will, is kind of the "capital" of the moon). Mike is in charge of "cleaning" the air (releasing oxygen and reducing toxic gases) and issuing paychecks to "free-borns" (which most of the moon's population is, by now), as well as various other tasks. One day, Mike just "woke up," and only Mannie, his repairman, knew it. The basic plot line of the book is the loonies' struggle for freedom and understanding from Earth, and we learn that "earning a paycheck" does not mean freedom for these people (nor should it for us, I'd hope). However, within this story, Mike's very existence forces us to ask, "what is consciousness?" Mike does not care about the many "loonies" and their struggle for freedom. (I also recommend this book for history buffs, since there are MANY parallels drawn to the American Revolution) Mike thinks all people except for Mannie are stupid. Mannie has to teach him things about humanity, and one of the larger questions of this book is "What is human?" Mike, for example, has an inquisitive nature and a need

to know many things that only Mannie can tell him about, even though he can access (and has) the entire library of congress. He asks Mannie to help him understand humor, and he longs for companionship from more "not-stupids." Mike, though machine, is very human.

Questions concerning the nature of humanity also arise in my other favorite Heinlein book, Stranger in a Strange Land. In this future, a ship is sent to Mars to start a colony. The ship consists of four married couples, all of whom are scientists. One of the men has an affair with one of the women, who of course, is also married. Her husband finds out when, after the colony has begun, the child is born. Enraged, he kills everyone present, with the exception of the child. The child, Michael Valentine Smith, is raised by the Martians, a peaceful people who in no way (physical or mental) resemble humans. War breaks out on Earth, and this colonial mission is forgotten. Thirty years later, a ship is sent up to determine what happened to the first. They find a grown man living on Mars, and bring this character, Valentine Michael Smith, (who is also called "Mike") to Earth.

While there are many other aspects to the plot, this Mike is also concerned with his "humanity," something he has only in a physical sense. Mike thinks like a Martian. He has a Martian understanding of science and mathematics, which is so far advanced from ours that many things Mike can do seem like supernatural powers. Mike can literally make things disappear, by "turning" them. For those who have an understanding of mathematical coordinate systems, he turns them "ninety degrees from everything else," into the fourth dimension. When he refers to "his people," however, he still speaks of Martians. Mike, although born of human parents, is not human. He does not

understand, for much of the book, why humans do some of the things that we do. To him, who comes from such an advanced culture, our ways are quite barbaric.

When Mike asks, "What is man?" his friend Jubal answers, "Man is the animal that laughs." From this, Mike concludes that he is not man, for he does not laugh, nor has he ever. He does not understand the nature of humor. One day, however, he does laugh; he looks on humanity with complete and total understanding: Humans laugh because we are sad. We are overwhelmed with sadness and grief in our barbaric lives, and we must laugh, or else we would die from heartache. He encourages his friend Jill to ponder all of the jokes that have ever given her a real, hard belly-laugh. In every one of them, he points out, someone gets hurt. However, the answer to "what is human" is far from the conclusion of the book. Instead of making Mike human, his comprehension of humanity causes him to attempt the impossible: He will aid us in enlightenment. He will make us Martians.

Though it may be hard to believe, I really do want you to read this book, so I'm not going to tell you how Mike attempts this or if he succeeds. I am also going to reiterate my strong recommendation of both of these books, or any other Heinlein works. The MU library contains 11 different Heinlein books, and two copies of Stranger in a Strange Land. So what are you still reading this for? Go!

"MEN WALK AS PROPHECIES OF
THE NEXT AGE."

-EMERSON



"I DREAMED I WAS A SCIENTIST
WHO DISCOVERED A CURE.
THEN THEY LOCKED ME AWAY
BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO BE SICK."
MINELLE SALLADE

Atheist in a Foxhole

Richard N. Feil

It is commonly said there are no atheists in a foxhole, that fear of death terrifies a skeptic into believing in God. I was unexpectedly forced into this situation when diagnosed with incurable cancer last fall. Confronted by my own mortality for the first time, where could I turn for spiritual meaning and comfort? I had been a devout Catholic for half of my life due to strong family influences. I uncritically accepted the dogma and found much comfort in the social network as well as the beautiful liturgy. My beliefs at that time provided meaning and purpose to my life and gave me hope for an existence after death.

I first questioned this worldview due to my graduate training in scientific psychology which provided me with the analytic tools to study human behavior in an objective and unbiased manner. I asked myself if the human being could be regarded as just another member of the animal kingdom, subject to the same laws of behavior as other animals. I slowly became convinced that our behavior can be fully explained without resorting to *supernaturalism*. That led me to the conclusion that we ourselves are part of an impersonal physical universe, the result of millions of years of natural selection. I learned that there has never been an empirically demonstrated exception to the laws of nature that has stood the test of scientific scrutiny despite numerous claims. How could I intellectually reconcile this deterministic view of reality with the *metaphysical* claims of religion? Could I dare question what millions of people accept as "gospel truth," and even sacrifice their lives for? For years I experienced growing cognitive dissonance as I tried to pretend both views of reality are true.

My thinking was further shaped by studies in anthropology and sociobiology. It is theorized that hunters and gathers in the prehistoric period survived the harsh

conditions by developing strong social cohesion and dependency as well as blind obedience to a strong leader. Today we also are programmed to follow authority figures uncritically, especially powerful and charismatic leaders. This, combined with our innate fear of rejection by the group, provides powerful peer pressure not to question the prevailing ideology. I certainly felt this need not to "think outside the box." But it conflicted with what I honestly believed to be true regarding human nature. I came to see religious faith as an unquestioning acceptance of beliefs that contradict reality.

I also think the strong, genetically programmed need for survival that we share with all living creatures, combined with the vivid imagination unique to humans, has, over the eons driven our species to construct an escape from the annihilation of physical death through fantasies of an afterlife. The promise of paradise, I believe, is the bargaining chip used by religion to subvert logical thinking, sometimes resulting in extreme physical and emotional misery. Religions tend to produce inflexible dogmatic thinking in their followers preventing them from achieving their full human potential.

It felt scary at first. But it was liberating to question the core assumptions of a belief system that most people take for granted. After reading the works of such writers as Thomas Paine, Robert Ingersol, Bertrand Russell, and other "free thinkers," I became convinced that, indeed, the emperor has no clothes.

What a marvelous and unique product of natural processes we humans are! We experience exciting developmental processes: becoming a person in childhood, the "sturm und drang" of adolescence, the challenges of adulthood, and the denouement of old age. We also get to observe ourselves making this journey full of thrills and chills. Our "selves" are capable of remembering, sharing, and anticipating future adventures in living. How many of us realize this is the only life we will ever have and therefore strive everyday to maximize our happiness and that of others?

And what of the atheist in the foxhole? Faced with the fear of death, will he cave in to cultural expectations and social pressure to plead with a god for magical intervention?

Or will he remain courageous and true to his convictions that this life is all there is and then do whatever he physically can to save himself? I think fear is the ultimate self-serving force underlying all forms of religious observance. We humans are ingenious in suspending logical reasoning in the pursuit of physical and emotional security.

I myself have not wavered in my philosophy of life as a rationalist and humanist. The meaning of my life lies in my family and in my personal and professional accomplishments. Now I treasure each remaining day as another opportunity to fully experience the joys of living. And in the end I shall tearfully bid farewell to my loved ones and simply cease to exist. Only my genes will live on in my children and their offspring.

**“When life does not find a singer to sing
her heart she produces a philosopher to
speak her mind.” ~Kahlil Gibran**

The Godman

By Scott Gibson

I'd like to be the first to welcome you to the quaint, lonely village of Bandan, somewhere-although where you're not exactly sure - in the heart of India. In all likelihood, this is probably the only welcome you'll get - not that villagers aren't friendly, because they are - but you have to understand that they have superstitions about strangers, especially outsiders who travel in gas powered vehicles. Take this very same village, for instance, exactly one month ago. A truck, something similar to the ice-cream truck that ran through your

neighborhood as a child, although it's cheerful colors and music were replaced with a drab, primer finish and the arrogant roar of a mufflerless exhaust, emerged from a cloud of dust and sand just at the end of the village road. It slowed as it approached the huts and finally stopped on the village perimeter a few dozen yards in front of the largest building, which was made of more than the straw and wood of the others, but of a substance not quite the product of masonry.

Nearly all the villagers were outside before the truck halted, since they heard the rumbling from far down the road. But they stood cautiously by their homes, as they will when *you* meet them, always feeling a bit apprehensive. The cloud of dust following the truck had caught up and engulfed the vehicle once again, and the villagers coughed and shielded their eyes as it stretched out among them. The village stood frozen for a moment, until a small boy ran to the front of the crowd and pointed, speaking in a language neither you or I understand: "Look at it! Hear it! It has an elephant's soul!" He was barely audible over the engine's roar, but sure enough, the villagers spewed forth accepting remarks to the boy's declaration. Indeed, the cumbersome gray truck did seem to have the soul of an elephant.

The vehicle carried other things more magical than an elephant's soul, however. When the dust completely cleared, footsteps and voices mingled together from the back side of the vehicle, and when the dust settled, a band of eight men, dressed western attire, stood shoulder to shoulder in a militaristic line.

The men marched toward the front of the truck and formed a semi-circle around the driver's side door, facing out toward the villagers who had managed the bravery to leave their homes for a closer look. The door opened, just a crack, and the engine halted with a grim puff of smoke from under the hood. A few more villagers gathered in curiosity. Then the door opened further (that little boy would have said it was the elephant's ear), and from it dropped two, unshod feet, dirty and mosquito bitten, onto the dirt road. Glimpses of red cloth fluttered around the legs and out from the side of the door; although the villagers could not see this with the guards

obstructing their view, they instead watched the vague form of a man's head, hooded, behind the dust-covered window.

The cloaked man emerged, and the entourage of this mysterious figure and his bodyguards marched unhurriedly toward the village. By this time the villagers' curiosity had grown enormously. Everyone crowded round, nearly possessed by the presence of the cloaked stranger. The guards held back the more aggressive villagers, except for that same little boy who recognized the elephant's soul. He managed to sneak through the wall, dodging legs and arms and coughing from the ground-dust until he reached the inner circle.

Expressionlessly, the cloaked man looked down to the urchin at his feet; the boy looked back at him, and as their eyes found each other's, the boy shouted "Guru! Guru! Guru!"

The boy's eyes remained fixed as he backed away through the guards, and into the center of the villagers, still shouting "Guru!" At these words the crowd ceased moving, ceased chattering, ceased everything, in fact except for fixing their eyes upon the godman. The natives kept their distances from the godman, and when far enough away to not be imposing on him, the instinctually dropped to their knees. The godman lowered his crimson hood onto his shoulders, revealing a black tuft of wildly strewn hair. He gazed at the bowing crowd before him, and a smile – which may have been sardonic to us, but not the villagers – came across his face.

No one spoke or moved for sometime until the godman commanded them to do so. "Rise and be blessed!" Again, this tongue you and I do not understand, although you may come to know it in time. The crowd silently obeyed, and the guards acquired more easy and casual positions at the godman's sides. As they dispersed, one of the guards went to the back of the truck and returned, handling a large, silver carafe to the godman. Moving closely to his subjects, close enough for them to touch, he began a spell that entranced the audience. Now, I'm not sure if the villagers could understand him; the language sounded different somehow than the natives' language – perhaps it was used only for spiritual purposes, the way we have used Latin. Regardless, the godman said his invocation and approaching some of the children spilled water from the container into the small, dirty

hand of the village's children. The water, he said, he created from nothingness, and the villagers mumbled expressions of confusion. The villagers might have been doubtful, indeed, but any doubts they had were dispelled momentarily.

The container, turned completely upside-down, dripped lightly into the hands of the children. Then, returning the container right-side up, the godman repeated his invocation of an aquatic spirit. Not moving his hands from the base of the container, the godman finished his recitation, and behold! He spilled water again on the hands of the children, and by now, some of the adult villagers gathered to have the water touch their hands, to know it was real, to be blessed with the presence of the godman. Many of the villagers did not get to witness the creation of water from air or have it touch their skin, so the godman promised – with the container upside-down again, I might add – to perform the feat once more.

The villagers and the godman himself seemed convinced of his holiness by now, and the natives formally invited him into the village. Everyone stayed closely among him, although still wary of the guards keeping watch. Everyone, that is, except for one man who hobbled as if one leg were significantly shorter than the other toward a small, decrepit hut.

The godman walked until he reached the largest building and stood elevated on the crumbling clay steps. The guards took almost rehearsed positions around the short stairway's perimeter, and the villagers, now believers in the godman's powers, gathered to witness the next miracle. What they saw was probably nothing that would astonish us into spiritual amazement, but these people have never seen magic were overwhelmed. The godman's arms flailed wildly as he recited cryptic language; his red cloak danced around him like a pyre's flames. His gestures grew vigorously. Each arm seemed to extend beyond its physical length. His eyes grew wide, wild, fierce, and finally obstinate, fixed on nothingness, until at last, in a flash of red and flesh he collapsed, arms stretched out before him, with seven new, crisp bank notes in his right hand. Two of the guards approached and helped the exhausted godman to his feet. They wiped the sweat and dust

from his forehead, gave him water to drink, and held him until he could stand on his own.

When the godman recovered most of his strength, he lifted the bank notes into the air for the crowd to behold. He staggered forward, down the steps, and into the crowd, handing the notes to men at random. Each recipient held the notes to the sky, looking at the delicate features, coming to terms with the reality of money that seemingly appeared from nothingness. The notes were genuine; I have no doubt about that, and I don't think you would doubt it, either. As the godman returned to the base of the steps, each of the seven men humbly thanked him for his gift.

For a short while after, the godman amused the villagers with theatrical feats; he produced a deck of cards, always finding the one which a villager wrote his or her name on, or somehow predicting which card was where, and when it would be drawn. Now hearing this, you say simply, "slight of hand," but to the villagers, the godman posed a conundrum of spiritual nothing more than sly may be taken seriously. Otherwise, I should say that you, too, might believe in this man's holy power.

That hobbling villager – the one you probably don't even remember being mentioned a few moments ago, who had inconspicuously left the congregation – was returning with two women who had not come to see the godman upon his arrival; one, a woman of approximately the same age as the hobbler, although in much better health, and between them, a girl of marrying age, who twitched violently as she clung to the shoulders of her father and mother. The two elders plodded with difficulty across the dirt road to the steps where the godman dazzled his followers; the girl was drug between them, her violent condition prevented her from walking under her own power.

The trio approached the godman, and the girl's convulsions become so dramatic that the parents were forced to drop her in the dirt before the steps. The father gestured for his wife to leave, and she did so promptly, joining in the heart of the congregation. Clumsily, the father ascended the steps, walking sideways to compensate for his crippledness, and dropped to his knees before the godman. He began to speak in

that foreign language we do not understand with the humble inflection; he was asking for the godman's aid in curing his daughter. — possessed by an evil spirit said her father — that is what causes her to shake so violently. The godman gestured for him to rise so that they may discuss the conditions of her aid. In return for his help, the godman demanded tribute, a hefty sum of money. Now you may question why the godman required money for performing miracles, especially since we have heard how he produced bank notes from empty space, witnessed by dozens of villagers. Many of the villagers questioned this just as we have, and the godman explained to them what it would take to cure this woman, thinking with a logic that is not worth explaining to a western mind; we could simply not understand. The villagers conferred, agreed, and knowing that the crippled father did not have the means to afford the exorcism of the evil spirit from his daughter's body, began to submit donations to the father. Meanwhile, the godman sent one of his cohorts to the gray truck to retrieve the necessary items for the exorcism.

When the guard returned, he carried two coconuts with tiny holes in the top, no larger than the nail on your smallest finger, through which the milk was drained. He also carried a waterskin, apparently full, over his shoulder, and an empty burlap sack.

The godman seated himself on the second lowest step before the girl, whom the father had managed to get sitting upright, if only for a moment. He began his ritualistic, cryptic chant, and anointed his subject with water from the skin. He then splashed droplets in a circle around himself and the woman and demanded that all the villagers stand back, for he had just consecrated the area to perform the exorcism.

Taking one coconut, the godman leaned forward toward the woman, placing his right hand on her forehead. However, her posture was unsteady, and the father was required to stand behind her to hold her quacking body in place. The godman then raised the coconut in his left, and recited lines of spiritual purification. His eyes grew fixated on nothingness again, just as they had when he produced the bank notes, and it seemed as if he did not blink several minutes, even as dust flew up in the breeze. His voiced climaxed into

indecipherable grunts and groans with operatic force. The woman trembled more violently now, and that trembling transferred through the right arm to the guru, all the way up to the hand which held the coconut high above his head. Indeed, everything seemed to quake as the exorcism progressed – the father, the mother, and the entire audience trembled with the utterances projected through the village by the strong voice of the godman. The sounds grew almost frightening; the woman and the guru were both groaning, until at last, she pierced the air with a sharp cry and collapsed on her side, limp-limbed and still.

The godman was sweating profusely now, and, still sitting, wiped his forehead clean. He then joined his right hand with the left, both holding the coconut in the air, and proclaimed that the evil spirit had been exorcised., that it was now contained in the coconut. He set it on the ground before the stairs, just a short distance away from the recovering woman. Looking with his penetrating eyes at the coconut, he told the audience to watch, and they would see the spirit trying to escape. And you would have not believed that it moved on its own! The coconut rocked at first, a little in every direction, and then starting rolling around in a circle, counterclockwise, until it found a small ditch at the bottom of the stairs. The force within the coconut was trapped in the ditch, and could only intermittently rock from side to side again, and the godman said that he was letting the evil spirit weaken so that it could be destroyed.

After some time, when the coconut finally ceased, the godman picked it up and demanded that the guard bring forth the other one; this would be the vessel in which the spirit would be destroyed. Holding the coconuts side by side in front of his chest, the godman shook both while raising them above his head, and at last proclaimed that the demon spirit had been transferred safely to its final embodiment. He handed the empty coconut to the guard who had gotten them from the truck, and it was placed in the burlap sack. The focus was now on the other coconut as the villagers awaited the destruction of the evil spirit. Holding the coconut high for the audience to see, the godman took the waterskin, put its mouth to the opening in the husk, and poured the remaining sanctified

water into the coconut vessel. Instantly smoke rose from the opening, and flames danced out of the tiny hole. The godman shouted in their mutual language, "The spirit is destroyed!" and the audience joined him in a chant, over and over, with climactic intensity: "the spirit is destroyed. The spirit is destroyed! *The spirit is destroyed!*" The flames grew higher and faster, and the coconut's husk started to smoke to the point where it seemed as if, no, it was, now burning on the outside as well. The heat was intense; the godman's hand and the forearm turned crimson red, and finally, as it became too hot to hold any longer, the godman raised his hand, the villagers shouted at its peak: "*The spirit is destroyed!*" and in one quick motion the godman brought his hand down, releasing the coconut, and it thoroughly shattered upon the ground, splattering some blood and some more forming a puddle at the godman's feet, from which a stream trickled down the clay stairs to the dirt, where the once possessed woman was still recovering.

Awestruck and overwhelmed with joy, the crippled man approached the godman, the savior of his daughter's soul. In his outstretched hand was the was of bank notes, crumbled and folded in a chaotic heap, except for seven new ones that lay on the top of the pile. The godman placed his hand upon the crippled man's, and with the money between their palms, the both gazed at the daughter who was no on her feet, as stable as any other of the cheerful villagers. The all approached her, confounded by her miraculous transformation, wanting to touch her steady, blushing her face.

Each person bore a sincere, open smile, except the godman, who would have still appeared sardonic to us. But the villagers were too preoccupied to notice. Nor did they notice what was happening behind them. As the guards closed the back door to the truck and the godman took his drivers seat, the villagers said farewell. Only a small boy who was fascinated with the miracles instead of the man looked in the other direction, and there he saw a burlap bag. The picked up the bag and probed inside, feeling the coarse husk of the coconut. Taking it from the bag the boy lost his grip, and the coconut dropped down the small flight of stairs to the dirt. As

it hit the ground it cracked, and a white field mouse poked through the opening, carrying the spirit of an elephant.

Big Sister

by Bobbi Button

Hold your sister's hand tight all the way to school and walk her straight to her classroom; don't boss her around; make her mind her manners; help her tie her shoe; read her a story; always let her sleep with you because she will be afraid, don't tell her ghost stories and if she wets in the bed just get up and put the sheets in the laundry and make up a bed on the couch; you wash the dishes and let her rinse; she can set the table and you can peel the potatoes; don't complain if she gets the new cloths and yours are from rummage sales, you will feel much better knowing that you gave something up so that she will feel less out of place; help her do her homework so she can take a shower while you rub dad's feet, she needs eight hours of sleep or she will be bitchy all day long; don't let anyone pick on her at school and if they do always beat the shit out of them for her; share your make-up, your clothes, and your boyfriends if it means she won't cry; *promise to take me when you do leave please*; always take the place of the mom when she needs you to because sisters are always best friends; she will date the guys you break up with because when they meet her they will see that she is the pretty one and you are the one looking for too much; her dreams are important and she will be famous someday and you are a nobody that will never amount to shit while she will be rich; forgive all of the hurtful words that she chooses to say or believe about you because she really admires your independence; visit her in a detention center because you are the only one that can talk any sense into her; *promise to come visit me please*; slap her mouth if she dishonors your mother in front of you but don't get upset if your mother ignores it; don't cry if you get the belt and daddy asks her if his little girl is okay, she is the real daughter you know; don't worry if she marries a guy that you once

dated and broke up with because he was a mean jerk; listen to her complain about his domineering ways even though you think it's a sin that she is having someone else's baby; laugh when she teaches your kids swear words or how to piss you off, she is only joking, wipe her tears when she says he is the one who gave her the bruise; *get me out of here please*; don't hit her when she hides your books and magazines because she says only nerds read that much; forgive her if she tells you that it is your fault her life is nothing because you broke your promise to take her with you; ignore her if she makes a pass at your husband, and give her Advil for a hangover; and when she uses you as a scapegoat don't ever nark her out; when she ignores the advice that she asks for during an all night phone call that she made collect, support her fully because you are a stronger woman; if she stays away for years and years you need to be the one to call her first because you are the big sister.

Long Shadows and Dark Nights

By Erin Delaney

Long shadows and dark nights The center is silent my stomach empty. Here in this hard-working town with nameless faces surrounding me I implode. The deafening silence concludes this page. Once again I have done the unthinkable These truths I follow laugh in my face in contempt All this through one phone call. The screaming in my brain The truth I mock. The knowledge I take for granted all are compromised now. One single step towards the darkness one path—not taken The wrong path I have chosen The ease of conformity, compromise, false belief, false truth, false acceptance Accepting what should have never been. Proposing, manipulating, and finally accepting Taking the hand of darkness and walking with my back to the light. I choose to

suffer—I choose this condition, this reality, this pain—self-inflicted. Casting aside my clothes for my naked body I give it all to continue in darkness. My body—old, worn, tired, sick and dusty My life set on the top of the book shelf The part that no one sees—so it's okay not to clean it. The part that cries out to be read—pages crinkling—words fading—sleeve untouched—binding uncreased Stuck on the shelf for eternity as the world's worst book The contents jumbled, out of place, without punctuation, or coherent letterings—Sighing in its own worthlessness Screaming to be read aloud But remains there silent—unread. Ever ounce of work the author has put into it is wasted If read, it could shake & stir its reader Yet it silently remains passive—maybe the majority of sentences were written passively It never asks for help—yet cries out to all who pass it Never taking initiative to make itself known Never to show its true value. Never to allow its content to seep into the readers mind It is time. Time to remove that content—time to push into the Brain. Time to scream out loud. Time to let its presence known. Time for Truth. Time for breaking boundaries. Time to Live. Time to deny whatever it chooses. Time to speak what it believes. Time to know thyself. Time to kill those thoughts. Time to Become. Time to burn pages & threaten liberation—threaten the impossible—threaten a new space, a new time, a new beginning—No more answers—No more questions—No more compromises, no more silence—No more lies—No more believing what conformity says—No More. No More No More No More No More No More No More No More No More No More No More No More No More. I refuse you. I deny you. I will silence you. I will Triumph. I will Become. I was that unread book. No More. I refuse to take any steps back. I will become what I want. I am motivated. I have drive. I will Conquer. I am Renaissance. I am a Romanticist. I Believe. I refuse you. I won't do this to myself again. I will not remain in darkness. I see the sun blinding my eyes & Burning my face. I am angry. I am full of contempt. I won't accept apathy. I refuse anything that is not on my terms. I deny you. I deny you. I refuse this meager apology. I won't do it again. I refuse. I refuse. I refuse. I am a ragged beat-up toy—overused—But I will mend—I will mend myself. I won't continue this. I can't do it anymore. I cannot

be that toy. I cannot be manipulated. I just was. I won't anymore. That's it. If it doesn't happen now, I will die. I will implode—I will curl up inside myself and disappear. I can't—I will be successful. I am a musician. I will overcome you. I deny you. I don't care if you are better—Red hair clinging to your thin Cassius-like face. Burnt out eyeballs so sight is impossible—thin slithering tongue sneaking on tiptoes against the wall as to not wake up anyone by stepping on the creaky floorboards below. The quick-handed jesster—making fun of me again—making me look like a fool. Haven't I embarrassed myself enough? My eyes blood red and searing in the sunshine. Dripping wet with blood. Tears cannot measure this pain. The blood drips on my stinky wet cigarette yellow smelling fingertips blood tinging my eyes. Ripping my heart out of my chest to crush it beneath your feet—a last prank? How many times? How many times? How many times? Ridicule—Ridiculous—escapism—realism—denial—regeneration—transformation—reconfiguration—derailment—fire—emptiness—passion—dreaming—leaving—finalization—truth—acceptance—sadness—understanding—experience—full circle. Cut the line with a sharp pair of shears Demands—I deny you. I deny this. I deny this pain. I deny you. I refuse you I refuse you I refuse you. Leave my soul. Leave my brain—exit my stomach—exit the silent empty pit of the depths of security—deny the comforts. Refuse it. Refuse the seething teeth toungeing the lies dripping from your lips—Bloody and Salt filled Sandy grit between your teeth—flesh & soul eating monster. Siren with sweet insanity songs piercing my flesh. Snakes skin. Snakes eyes. Snakes tongue. Slithering on your belly—tickling my ear with your truthful—lies. Silence! Silence! Silence! No More No More No More No More—I deny you. Smoky breath full of lies—tagging me like a sick science experiment Following me through these woods. The long shadow evokes the implosion—the implosion—the lack of better words—the easily accepting pawn—The chess-piece on a worn out table where the squares all Begin to look alike. The damnation of my life—my soul—my worst fears frozen in time to look face to face to and sink into the corner of life The cavern of emptiness—unending without a bottom. Without a spine.

Without a backbone—a fish a spineless fish. a spineless wordless coverless
non-coherent book rotting on the shelf of dark silence. That's it—it's
over—over—over—over—over—over—over—over—over—
over—over—over—over—over—over—over—over—over....



The Adventures of Philosophy Club 2001-2002

Mansfield University's Philosophy Club is open to any student traditional or non-traditional, commuter or campus resident, and philosophy or non-philosophy major. In previous years, it was a tradition to go to Washington, DC to the various museums for club trips. However, in the past year we have changed this format and have been taking trips to Concord and Boston, MA. We have visited Walden Pond, Emerson's Homestead, the Concord Museum, Harvard Square, and many other places. The pictures below are from our fall 2001 conquest of Boston and Concord, MA. If this seems like a ploy to get you to join the club well, it was that obvious, wasn't it? So getting that out of the way, if it will

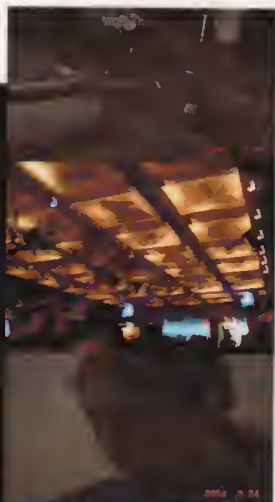
further convince you, we have pizza at all our weekly meetings and will be going to Boston and Concord in the beginning of the Fall 2002 semester. So come to a meeting, or you may miss your chance! ☺

"I WENT TO THE WOODS BECAUSE
I WISHED TO LIVE DELIBERATELY, TO
FRONT ONLY THE ESSENTIAL FACTS
OF LIFE.

AND SEE IF I COULD NOT LEARN
WHAT IT HAD TO TEACH

AND NOT, WHEN I CAME TO DIE,
DISCOVER THAT I HAD NEVER
LIVED"

-HENRY D. THOREAU-



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Till Feb 28

Call for Submissions Synapse 2002-2003

We will be accepting submissions for
Synapse 2002-2003 until *November 1st, Fall 2002*. We are
interested in philosophical submissions in genres of Poetry,

Artwork, Photography, Essays, Scholarly Papers.

Please send submissions *on disk/CD* to:

Steven Bickham at steven.bickham@utoronto.ca or

Come to a *club meeting* Thursdays at 12:30pm,
417 South Hall. 662-4742



"If God does not exist, than anything is possible."
--Dostoevsky

"NO WHY, JUST HERE."

-JOHN CAGE

"Mirrors and copulation are abominable
because they both increase the number of humans."

-Borges

"I don't know if I am now a man
dreaming I am a butterfly
or if I was then a butterfly dreaming I
was a man." -Chuang Tzu

"Military Intelligence is a contradiction of terms."

-Groucho Marx

**“Going to church doesn’t
Make you a Christian anymore
Going to the garage makes you a
car.”**

-Laurence J. Peter

**“If you are of the opinion that
the contemplation of suicide is
sufficient evidence of a poetic
nature, do not forget that actions
speak louder than words.”**

- Fran Lebowitz

“The men the American people admire most extravagantly are the most daring liars, the men they detest most violently are those who try to tell them the truth.” –H.L. Mencken

I am a philosopher. I may not have
a job, but at least I know why.
(stolen joke)

“Our major problem is the brainwashing of children and adults. It’s the worst in the world.” - Duke Ellington

“To ridicule philosophy is really to philosophize.” –Pascal



